

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 IO-13 DHA-02 ACDA-07 OMB-01 EB-08 COME-00
TRSE-00 /044 W
-----083252 261705Z /53

O R 261550Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 245
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USMISSION NATO
DIA WASHDC

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E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, UR, US
SUBJECT: SOVIET PRESS COMMENTARY SINCE PRESIDENT'S CHARLESTON
SPEECH

REF: MOSCOW 10624

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SUMMARY: THE SOVIET PRESS IS STILL REACTING CAUTIOUSLY TO THE
PRESIDENT'S SPEECH ON US-SOVIET RELATIONS AND IS
REFRAINING FROM PERSONAL ATTACKS. ON THE MAJOR
ISSUES, HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE INITIAL SOVIET PRESS REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S
SPEECH ON U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS WAS BOTH CAUTIOUS

AND RELATIVELY MODERATE. IT TOOK TASS OVER ONE DAY TO PRODUCE ITS FIRST, MOSTLY FACTUAL, REPORT OF THE SPEECH WHICH REFRAINED FROM MAKING ANY SUBSTANTIAL CRITICISMS (REFTEL). ON JULY 24 VITALIY KORIONOV, WRITING IN PRAVDA'S INTERNATIONAL WEEK REVIEW, GAVE THE FIRST, AND THUS FAR ONLY, SOVIET PRESS COMMENTARY ON THE CARTER SPEECH.

2. KORIONOV AVOIDED ANY SHARP CRITICISM OF THE PRESIDENT AND NOTED THAT PARTS OF THE SPEECH WERE "NOT BAD." BUT HE ALSO REMARKED THAT AS FOR THE "CONCRETE DIRECTION OF AMERICAN POLICY," THE SPEECH DID NOT MARK ANY CHNAGE. HE THEN PROCEEDED TO CRITICIZE PARTICULAR ASPECTS OF U.S. POLICY (CRUISE MISSILES, NEUTRON BOMB, HUMAN RIGHTS AND TRADE) IN STANDARD TERMS BUT IN A TONE WHICH LACKED THE STRIDENCY OF RECENT SOVIET COMMENTATORS.

3. KORIONOV FOCUSED PARTICULARLY ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, CLAIMING THAT THIS "PROVOCATIVE CAMPAIGN" AGAINST THE "SOCIALIST COUNTRIES" WAS CREATING OBSTACLES BOTH TO THE BETTERMENT OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS AS WELL AS TO THE CONCLUSION OF A SALT AGREEMENT. HE THEN QUOTED WEST EUROPEAN LEADERS (GISCARD, SCHMIDT, ANDREOTTI, THORN AND BRANDT) TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR CONCERN THAT U.S. POLICIES ARE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ENDANGERING THE DETENTE RELATIONSHIP.

4. KORIONOV'S FAILURE TO ATTACK THE PRESIDENT, AS HAS BEEN COMMON IN RECENT SOVIET PRESS COMMENTARY, HAS BEEN MATCHED BY A SIMILAR FAILURE IN SEVERAL COMMENTARIES APPEARING IN THE SOVIET PRESS SINCE THE PRESIDENT'S JULY 21 SPEECH. PRAVDA, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS CARRIED SEVERAL STRONGLY WORDED TEXTS ON THE NEUTRON BOMB ISSUE WHICH HAVE REFRAINED FROM ANY DIRECT CRITICISM OF THE PRESIDENT OR OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. V. KOBISH, WRITING FROM NEW YORK, IN IZVESTIYA JULY 25, NOT ONLY FAILED TO ATTACK THE PRESIDENT ON THIS SAME ISSUE BUT ENDED HIS OTHERWISE STRIDENTLY CRITICAL COMMENTARY WITH A RELATIVELY MILD NOTATION THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL ULTIMATELY HAVE TO DECIDE WHICH WAY TO GO ON THE NEUTRON BOMB ISSUE BY THE END OF SUMMER, THUS IMPLYING THAT A FINAL DECISION REMAINS TO BE MADE AND REFRAINING FROM PREJUDGING THE PRESIDENT'S ACTIONS (A CAUTION POSSIBLY PROMPTED BY THE FACT THAT THE SOVIET PRESS WAS CAUGHT OFF BY THE B-1 DECISION).

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5. IN A SIMILAR WAY THE DRUMBEAT OF PRESS COMMENT
ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE CONTINUES BUT IS DIRECTED
AT TARGETS OTHER THAN THE PRESIDENT. ON JULY 26
PRAVDA PUBLISHED A LONG PIECE BY POLITICAL COMMENTATOR
A. TOLKUNOV WHICH AMOUNTED TO A HATCHET JOB
ON "CONSERVATIVE FORCES" IN THE U.S. (E.G., BARRY
GOLDWATER) WHO ADOPT MORALISTIC POSITIONS ON HUMAN
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RIGHTS BUT WHO DEFEND ORGANIZATIONS (E.G., THE FBI) AND STATES (E.G., NICARAGUA) WHICH AS A MATTER OF COURSE VIOLATE HUMAN RIGHTS. KORIONOV, IN THE INTERNATIONAL WEEK REVIEW, WAS ALSO CAREFUL TO ATTRIBUTE THE "PROVOCATIVE CAMPAIGN" TO UNSPECIFIED "FORCES" WHO WISH TO INURE U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS AND CONTINUE THE ARMS RACE.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH IT IS TOO EARLY TO SEE A CLEAR TREND IN SOVIET PRESS COMMENT ON THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE PRESIDENT, THESE FIRST INDICATIONS SEEM TO SHOW A HIATUS ON CRITICISM OF PRESIDENT CARTER PERSONALLY AND OF HIS ADMINISTRATION. THERE IS NO LET UP, HOWEVER, IN THE STRIDENT CRITICISM OF U.S. POLICIES. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE SOVIET PRESS INTENDS TO CONTINUE THIS TACTIC AND IF SO WOULD SEEM TO BE POSITIONING ITSELF TO BE ABLE TO CRITICIZE THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION POLICIES AS BEING INCONSISTENT WITH THOSE "NOT BAD" ELEMENTS OF THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH CONCERNING THE BASIC NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT IN SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS. THIS WOULD ALLOW THEM TO ARGUE THAT THE "INCONSISTENCY" SHOULD BE RESOLVED BY A CHANGE IN THE "CONCRETE DIRECTION OF AMERICAN POLICY" (KORIONOV'S PHRASE). THE KORIONOV PIECE ALSO INDICATES THAT THERE IS AS YET NO LESSENING OF SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO PROTRAY WEST EUROPEAN ATTITUDES AS DIVERGENT FROM U.S., THUS SUGGESTING THAT THE U.S. IS ISOLATED FROM ITS ALLIES ON THE MAJOR DETENTE ISSUES. DESPITE THE REPETITION OF THESE THEMES, A FULLY AUTHORITATIVE SOVIET COMMENT HAS NOT YET EMERGED, AND THE SOVIETS SEEM TO BE PRESERVING THE OPTION TO GIVE THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH A GUARDEDLY POSITIVE ASSESSMENT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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